

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-19 (Canceled)

20. (currently amended) Apparatus for applying at least one coating to objects by vapor deposition (PVD) under vacuum, comprising:

a PVD device for coating an object under a vacuum;

at least one lock separating the PVD-device from an ambient environment;

a transport device which extends through the PVD-device and into the lock, wherein the transport device is adapted to transport objects arranged on removable carriers, and the PVD device is adapted for semi-continuous treatment of objects arranged on the carriers;

a preprocessing device for performing a preprocessing on the object; and

a postprocessing device for postprocessing the object, wherein the transport device extends through said at least one lock, the preprocessing device and the postprocessing device;

wherein the carriers are elongate and object holders having vertical shafts are present on the carriers, the object holders being rotatable and the transport device being adapted to move the carriers substantially in the longitudinal direction and to rotate the object holders in the PVD device;

wherein the PVD device is connected to the ambient environment by a single lock, the transport device extends through the lock and the lock is adapted to feed a carrier simultaneously into and out of the PVD device; and

wherein the transport device has a closed configuration and extends in two directions through the PVD device.

21. (canceled)

22. (canceled)

23. (canceled)

24. (previously amended) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein a buffer for the carriers is arranged between the preprocessing device and the PVD device.

25. (previously added) Apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein a buffer for the carriers is arranged between the PVD device and the postprocessing device.

26. (previously added) Apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein the buffers are adapted to move the carriers in transverse direction.

27. (previously added) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the preprocessing device comprises a blower device for blowing dust from the objects.

28. (previously added) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the preprocessing device comprises an application device for applying a lacquer to the objects that cures with UV or IR radiation, and a device for irradiating the lacquered objects with the relevant radiation.

29. (previously added) Apparatus as claimed in claim 28, wherein the preprocessing device comprises a surface processing device coupled to the application device for processing the surface of the objects prior to the application device applying the lacquer.

30. (previously added) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the postprocessing device comprises an application device for applying a lacquer onto the objects that cures UV radiation, and a device for irradiating the lacquered objects with the UV radiation.

31. (previously added) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein a loading/unloading station is placed between the postprocessing device and the preprocessing device for unloading processed objects and loading objects for processing.

32. (currently amended) Carrier for use in an apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein an first object holder is present on the carrier, the object holder being interchangeable with an second object holder present on another carrier.

33. (previously added) Carrier as claimed in claim 32, wherein the object holder is placed on a vertically extending shaft mounted rotatably in the carrier.

34. (previously added) Carrier as claimed in claim 33, wherein a toothed wheel is arranged on the shaft for driving the shaft in rotation.

35. (previously added) Carrier as claimed in claim 34, wherein the toothed wheel is arranged under a top side of the carrier.

36. (previously added) Carrier as claimed in claim 35, wherein the toothed wheel enters openings arranged in the carrier and protrudes outside side walls of the carrier.

37. (previously added) Apparatus adapted for use with the carrier recited in claim 34, the apparatus including a cam for engaging in and rotating the toothed wheel during passage of the carrier.

38. (previously added) Apparatus as claimed in claim 37, wherein the cam forms part of a drivable chain for causing the shaft to rotate independently of the linear movement of the carrier.